



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

15. — 1. *The History of India, as told by its own Historians. The Muhammadan Period. Edited from the Posthumous Papers of the late SIR H. M. ELLIOT, K. C. B., East India Company's Bengal Civil Service.* By PROFESSOR JOHN DOWSON, M. R. A. S., Staff College, Sandhurst. Vol. I. London: Trübner & Co. 1867. 8vo. pp. xxxii., 541.
2. *The History of India from the Earliest Ages.* By J. TALBOYS WHEELER, Assistant Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, Secretary to the Indian Record Commission, Author of "The Geography of Herodotus," &c., &c. Vol. I. The Vedic Period and the Mahá Bhárata. London: Trübner & Co. 1867. 8vo. pp. lxxv., 576.

WE have reason to welcome every new indication that England is taking a nearer interest in her Indian empire, and that her people crave further enlightenment respecting those Eastern races of whose destinies she has, half against her will, become arbiter. It may fairly be said, we presume, that England never coveted such a dependency, and made no conscious and deliberate attempt to gain it. She wanted trade, and nothing more; and it was only because trade was not to be had without empire, as those who were sent to manage the former soon found out, that the latter was acquired, piece by piece, in the face of constant remonstrance from home, in spite of constant protestation of unwillingness on the part of the acquirers. Hence, in part, the anomalous attitude of the English government, and the indifference of the people, until within a few years. When the great mutiny broke out, Indian affairs were still under the management of a committee of merchants, the directors of a trading company, — not, indeed, without the active interference and control of the Parliament and Ministry; and the long retention of that antiquated and bungling apparatus was in no slight degree indicative of the state of public feeling, which regarded India as not in the full sense a national trust, a responsibility whose weight should be felt upon the shoulders of every Englishman, but as something to be attended to by proxy, to be put off upon a board. The desperate struggle of ten years ago, however, rapidly changed the aspect of affairs. As it swept away in a moment the old form of administration, so it aroused the nation at large to a more realizing sense of their duty, and made them eager to learn wherein this consisted. Every one for a while was studying India, and books about it came thick and fast: more general knowledge was gained in two or three years than had been won in the half-century preceding. Nor has the impulse yet ceased to exert its influence, although it is working out its

results more slowly than were to be desired, or than the more sanguine had expected. A race of so peculiar character, beliefs, and institutions as the Hindus, and so fixed in them by the inheritance of an almost immemorial culture, demands, on the one hand, delicate and considerate treatment, and, on the other hand, is hard to be understood, so as to receive the treatment due it, by another race so unlike itself.

It is, then, matter for congratulation that a single English house can issue at the same time the beginnings of two elaborate and voluminous histories of India, and can find a large and rapid sale for both, as we learn is the case.

The volumes before us, however unlike one another in other respects, have two noteworthy points of resemblance: both are the work of men who have gained in the Anglo-Indian service a familiar acquaintance with the country and its inhabitants, and both rather deal with the sources of history than present the final results of historic inquiry. The author of the first, Sir Henry Elliot, stood high among the civil servants of the East India Company who added to administrative capacity a hearty interest in the people over whom they were set, and distinguished literary ability. He wore himself out in the harness, and died, fifteen years ago, at the early age of forty-five. He had published in 1849 the commencement of a Bibliographical Index to the *Historians of Mohammedan India*, and during the following years had made abundant preparations for its extension and completion; and his gathered materials are now at last to be given to the world under the competent editorship of Professor Dowson. The whole work, the latter tells us, will require at least four volumes. The first, after an introductory division of about a hundred pages, in which are put together (chiefly by the editor) all the accessible notices respecting India given by the early Arab geographers, is devoted to the historians of Sind, the western border of the country, lying upon the lower Indus. About two hundred and twenty-five pages are occupied with a version of the more important passages of their works; and then the latter half of the volume gives us the author's notes upon them, under four heads, Geographical, Historical, Ethnological, and Miscellaneous. The second and third of these divisions, especially, constitute for the general reader the most interesting and valuable portion of the book. For the Arab chronicles fall even further below our idea of histories than do the European of the Middle Ages, and, though attractive at the outset by their peculiarity, soon become excessively tedious.

In the succeeding volumes, the same general plan is to be followed. We are to have the native histories themselves, with such notes as shall help us to understand them and appreciate their value. The work

will thus wear a somewhat special character, as a collection of original documents, interesting to scholars most of all, yet also commending itself to the attention of the public at large; and no public library at least should be without it.

An interesting passage of the author's Preface criticises the opinions commonly held respecting the works executed by the Mohammedan sovereigns for the material welfare of the country, greatly depreciating the value of those works, and comparing them, much to their disadvantage, with what the English have already executed or undertaken; contrasting, moreover, the general condition of the country under its Mohammedan and Christian masters.

While Elliot's History thus professes to deal with but one of the grand periods into which the story of the country naturally falls, and with that from only a single point of view, Mr. Wheeler's, more ambitious, aims to give us the whole story, "from the earliest times" down to the present. In the author's Preface, however, is as yet sketched out only the first portion, that which is to depict the times antecedent to the rise of British power, — the Hindu and Mohammedan periods. To this are allotted three volumes: the first already in our hands, after a brief introduction of forty pages on the Vedic period, is wholly occupied by a detailed analysis of the enormous epic poem entitled the Mahabharata, interspersed with critical comments; the second, now in the press, will perform the same service for the other great Sanskrit epic, the Ramayana; the third is to "include the results of the other two, as well as those which are to be drawn from the more salient points in Sanskrit and Mussulman literature." (p. vi.) Not a few will be struck with surprise at this plan, which contemplates the absorption of two thirds of the whole space allotted to the history of India down to a century or two ago by an abstract of the contents of two works from the Sanskrit literature, and they will be curious to see how the author justifies such a procedure. They will find, then, that his classification of his materials (p. v.) recognizes as the sources for the Hindu period "the religious books of the Hindus, and especially the two great epics, which may be regarded as the national treasures of all that has been preserved of the history and institutions of the people"; and that, in his opening chapter (p. 3), he makes the confirmatory statement that "the history of India, properly so called, is to be found in the two voluminous epics. . . . These extraordinary poems comprise the whole of what remains of the political, social, and religious history of India, and may be regarded as the reflex of the Hindu world."

Now, what is the character of these alleged all-sufficient sources for our knowledge of Indian history? Do they explain to us the deriva-

tion of the Hindu people, point out the course of its migrations, and exhibit the creeds and institutions with which it entered the peninsula? Do they set forth the gradual development which transformed those simple institutions into the elaborate Brahmanic hierarchy, those simple creeds into the mingled superstition and transcendentalism of later India? Do they let us see the rise and career of Buddhism, its early conquests, its final defeat and expulsion? Do they portray the growth of that remarkable literature which is receiving so much study from the scholars of Europe in our day? Do they account for the existing monuments of art, the ruins of perished grandeur, the epigraphic remains scattered through the country? No: on matters such as these they are no better than dumb. But at least they must record the dynastic revolutions which have changed the political aspect of the peninsula, the formation and description of empires, the intestine and foreign wars of successive lines of princes? Not even these are found in them. Then what are they? Why, the one, the Ramayana, tells of a hero who perhaps never had an historical existence, and who met with adventures and performed feats quite unknown among actual men, conquering a demon foe by the aid of monkey allies. The other, the Mahabharata, recounts the struggles of two related houses, whose connection with any historically established dynasties cannot be traced, for the possession of one of the thrones of Central India, at an unknown epoch; it is interminably protracted, and confessedly put together out of portions dating from very different periods; it contains stories which attain the dimensions of a romance, and philosophical conversations as detailed as a text-book; it is in part legendary, in part fabricated for a purpose. No doubt they both illustrate, in a certain way, the Hindu modes of thinking and acting. They are two highly important and characteristic products of the Indian mind, and can no more help reflecting the conditions among which they grew up than can any other similar work in the whole great catalogue of national literatures. So the Iliad and Odyssey depict for us, in many respects, the conditions of ancient Greece with a vividness and faithfulness which no set history could rival; yet what eyes of astonishment would be opened upon the scholar who should assert that they "comprise the whole of what remains of the political, social, and religious history of Greece," and should therefore proceed to give us a full account of their contents, as the first and largest part of his Grecian history! This is a comparison which in one important respect, at least, is highly flattering to the Hindu poems; for the historical content and illustrative value of the Western epics is indefinitely greater than that of the Eastern. The Hindu mind, as every one knows who knows aught about it, is

remarkably distinguished by its incapacity of historical production, its carelessness of the actual, its disinclination to tell a straight story; hence there is vastly more *fact* in the Iliad than in the Mahabharata; nor is the expedition of Ulysses, however palpable its wonder telling, anything but the driest and soberest of narratives compared with that of Rama. The Nibelungen-lied, treated as principal source of ancient German history, would come far nearer to offering us a true parallel. Mr. Wheeler may insist as much as he pleases upon the popularity and currency of his favorite poems, their influence upon the people (in speaking upon this point, however, he is guilty, in our opinion, of very gross exaggeration), the importance of a knowledge of them to a comprehension of what the modern Hindu is thinking and talking about, — he cannot change their essential character, nor convert them from products of a teeming and unchastened imagination into fountains of historic truth. The part they contribute to our knowledge of ancient India is only secondary; it might with much higher truth be claimed that the Vedas or that the laws of Manu are the veritable and indispensable sources of Hindu history. Far from being entitled to figure in this capacity, the epics themselves need the most careful sifting and testing, by the aid of all the appliances derivable from whatever other quarter, in order to determine the question whether they have an historical content, and if so, how much and what. Something of this work has already been accomplished by men like Lassen; and the possibility of continuing and completing it is brought nearer every day. But it will not, we think, be perceptibly advanced by the criticisms which Mr. Wheeler intersperses with his abstracts and extracts; these do not cut deep enough; they are essentially superficial and commonplace, and not seldom of a remarkable *naïveté*, — somewhat as if one should sit down over Munchausen or Gulliver, and soberly undertake to strip off its exaggerated and improbable features, and extract the kernel of historic verity of which it is the decorated version. We cannot, therefore, look forward with much hope to those “results” of his two preliminary volumes with which our author is intending to begin his third, — the first, according to our view, of the real “History of India”; for in no allowable sense of the term can his analysis be called “history.” We presume that his work will increase rapidly in value and authority as it approaches the modern period of the English domination, for treating which his Indian experience and official position have given him especial advantage.

To write, indeed, in a permanently satisfying manner, the history of ancient India is for the present an impossible task. The sources of knowledge are as yet only partially accessible, and only to a small

extent worked up. The whole great body of native literature of every period, the information furnished by foreigners, the monuments, the modern conditions, have all to be ransacked, compared, criticised, and reduced. From original labor in a large part of this field, Mr. Wheeler, acknowledging his non-acquaintance with the Sanskrit, declares himself shut out. Yet what can be done, even under such disadvantage, by one who is diligent in collecting and studying all materials attainable at second hand, the results won by special scholars, — who is skilled in their combination, and possessed of a true feeling for the spirit of ancient times, — is shown in Duncker's History of Antiquity (*Geschichte des Alterthums*). This author's picture of ancient India, though too constructive in its style, and sure to require amendment hereafter in many important particulars, is nevertheless the fullest, most faithful, and most attractive that we know; it well deserves republication in an English version. Mr. Wheeler has followed the much easier course of extolling as all-sufficient that little portion of the needed material to which his attention has happened to be directed, and which was most readily accessible to him, and of ignoring the rest.

But while we deny the justice of the title which our author has prefixed to his volume, we can yet commend it as an admirable and highly interesting epitome of the Mahabharata, the best that has been placed in the hands of English readers, and worthy to be recommended to the attention of all who are curious respecting that strange and remarkable product of the human mind. A Table of Contents of sixty-eight pages, and an Index of forty-two, both of excessive detail, drawn out with a truly lavish expenditure of labor, add much to its value, and to the ease with which it may be consulted and used. To receive a similar working up of the Ramayana will afford us high satisfaction.

-
16. — *Bibliotheca Americana; A Dictionary of Books relating to America, from its Discovery to the Present Time.* By JOSEPH SABIN. New York: Joseph Sabin. Philadelphia: John Campbell. London: N. Trübner & Co. 1867. 8vo.

FOUR parts of this work have been issued by Mr. Sabin during the year 1867, embracing in all 384 pages. To show the extensive plan on which the work is projected we quote the language of the editor: "This work describes bibliographically, and in alphabetical order, ALL the books published in this country or abroad which relate to its History, — using the word in its widest meaning; including the books described by Rich, Ternaux, White, Kennett, Faribault, Stevens,